

EVOLUTION OF THE FOOTBALL HELMET SINCE 1946

Joan Murphy & Sean Dougherty, *Progressions: Evolution of the football helmet since 1946*, USA Today (Dec. 16, 2010, 5:48 PM),
http://www.usatoday.com/sports/2010-12-13-progressions-footballhelmets_N.htm?loc=interstitialskip

1950s-Era Helmet



Detroit Lions and NFL hall of famer Jack Christiansen played in this early plastic helmet (1950). John Riddell, a high school football coach, left teaching and coaching and started Riddell Sports, Inc. He invented the plastic-shell helmet in 1939 to replace the stiff leather ones players wore. He added webbing to provide a pocket of air between the player's head and the helmet. In 1940, he invented the chin strap. But because of war-time plastic shortages, his helmets weren't used until after World War II. Today, approximately 80% of NFL players wear Riddell helmets.

Pro Football Hall of Fame

The Radio Helmet



In 1956, inventors John Campbell and George Sarles showed Cleveland Browns coach Paul Brown a radio receiver they could fit in a helmet. Campbell and Sarles tested it in the woods behind Campbell's house. Sarles went deep (in the woods) and didn't return. Campbell found him talking to a police officer who had picked up their signal. (They changed the frequency.) Browns quarterback George Ratterman wore the helmet in an exhibition game against the Detroit Lions and it worked perfectly – except the Lions discovered the transmitter. Other teams tried radio helmets without success. After three more games it was banned by the NFL . In 1994, radio helmets were allowed again.

Pro Football Hall of Fame

1960s-Era Helmet



In the 1960's, helmets had a two-piece shell and web suspension. In the late '60s, there were some steel face guards but those weren't as popular as the ones made of tubular plastic.

Riddell

The Modern Helmet



To protect against concussions, Riddell's Revolution helmet has built-in electronics to record head impact. The data can be downloaded in real time to assess the location, magnitude and duration of the impact. Helmets also have quick-release face masks to allow medical personnel to gain airway access if needed.

Riddell